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NEWS RELEASES

For Immediate Release: August 8, 2003

IS03-153

WEST NILE VIRUS FOUND IN MOSQUITOES IN SASKATOON

The City of Saskatoon today announced that West Nile Virus has been found in the Culex tarsalis mosquito in Saskatoon. This was expected since the West Nile Virus (WNv) was found in the Saskatoon bird population several weeks ago.

"We have been using nine specialized mosquito traps (CDC and Gravid style) that allow the collection of live mosquitoes to be identified to species and tested for the WNv," says Jeff Balone, Supervisor of Pest Management, Infrastructure Services department.

The City of Saskatoon strategy will continue to target mosquito breeding sites, larval surveillance and treatment, adult monitoring and species assessment. This will be complimented with enhanced public awareness and education on elimination of mosquito breeding sites on private property and personal protection measures.

As announced by Saskatoon Health Region yesterday, testing on dead birds will be discontinued now that it is established that the virus is in Saskatoon. It is no longer necessary to report dead crow-family birds to the City for pick-up.

"The Culex tarsalis has been the mosquito we have been most concerned with since its biting switches from predominately birds to mammals (i.e. humans, horses) in mid summer once nesting season is over."

The female Culex tarsalis is active throughout the night with highest flight activity found between the hours of 2200 and 2300 hours. However, local research has shown some biting in the day as well. Humans would be at greatest risk of being bitten when entering or working near long vegetation at night.

The Culex tarsalis likes stagnant water, rich in organic matter. They can be found in grassy marshes, irrigation and roadside ditches. As populations build in the summer, this mosquito may spread to small temporary water bodies and artificial containers.

Saskatoon residents can assist with reducing mosquito populations by eliminating breeding sites on their property. Mosquitoes need water to breed, and their eggs and larvae can develop in any water, even small amounts that are allowed to stand for four days or more. To aid in the prevention of

mosquito breeding:

- Ensure items in and around the property like pool covers, saucers under flowerpots, children's toys, pet bowls, and wading pools are regularly emptied of standing water.
- Clean eaves troughs regularly so water does not collect.
- Empty and clean bird baths twice weekly.
- Ensure that openings in rain barrels are covered with mosquito screening.
- Aerate ornamental ponds and stock with fish that eat mosquito larvae.
- Ensure that your yard is free of debris such as old tires that can hold rainwater.

People can take preventative measures to minimize the opportunity for mosquito bites by:

- Wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and applying insect repellent;
- Minimize time spent outdoors between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active;
- Making sure all windows and doors in homes are tight-fitting and properly screened; and
- Removing standing water from property to discourage mosquito breeding.

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